An Introduction to Theosophy

By

H. Arthur Wilson

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THEOSOPHY

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DEDICATED

To My Dear Wife,

And likewise to all those fellow-men who have ceased to believe in anything—in the hope that this book may help them as it has helped her, for whom it was in the first place written.

H. A. W.

Sydney, N. S. W., June, 1898.

PREFACE.

THE Series of articles which make up this booklet were originally published in *Theosophy in Australia*, the organ of the Australasian Section of the Theosophical Society. So well and so kindly was it received, that the author was encouraged to think it might serve a useful purpose if issued in book form, as a preliminary introduction to a wider and deeper study of Theosophy, as set forth in the literature of the movement. Those wishing to further study the subjects so fleetingly touched on here, are referred to the Theosophical Manuals, "The Seven Principles of Man," "Reincarnation," "Death and After," etc., etc., where the subjects of each of the chapters of this "Introduction" are dealt with separately, technically and with more particularity.

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—AN—

INTRODUCTION TO THEOSOPHY.

CHAPTER I.

The Need for Theosophy.

THE dictionary definition of Theosophy is, "direct intuitional knowledge of God;" and if there is a God, and the world and all the forms of life we see in it are not the mere chance productions of blind forces working with matter, there is great need of our knowing and realizing it, either intuitionally or in any other way which will bring the fact home to our consciousness.

As put forward in this Nineteenth Century of ours, the word Theosophy stands for all that has been found most true, most reasonable, and most intellectually and spiritually satisfactory concerning man, nature, and the universe.

In the highest and widest sense it may be taken as meaning "Divine Wisdom"—all that has been discovered in the past, all that is known in the present, and all that it will be possible to know in the future, of the Reality which underlies this changing show of things called, in its totality, life, and in its

separated appearances matter, force and consciousness.

In this latter sense, that of consciousness, we cannot know it fully until we ourselves become omniscient, if we ever do; but all that man has discovered up to the present, by reason, by intellect, or by intuition, that is good for us to know, can be known if we are willing to take the trouble necessary for the understanding of it.

Before the founding of the Theosophical Society, in New York, in 1875, three systems of thought dealt more or less partially with these problems of man, nature and the universe. Religion took the consciousness aspect, science the matter aspect, and metaphysics the force aspect.

But no system of thought made any attempt to bring these three into harmony with one another. They were like three men looking at things, each through spectacles of a different color. One saw the world all blue, another all yellow, and a third all red; and not one of them being willing to admit that the difference might be accounted for by the difference in their spectacles, nothing but quarrels and hard words resulted.

The position taken by orthodox religion some twenty years ago—and it is, perhaps, maintained even yet by those who believe in the plenary inspi-

ration and literal interpretation of the Bible—was that the universe was the creation of a personal God, a sort of glorified immortal man, who made the earth and all its creatures in seven days, placing the sun, moon and stars in the heaven to give it light, the plants upon it to clothe it, the animals to minister to man's comfort, and, last of all, created man in his own image, to be his vice-regent and plenipotentiary. Everything was then perfect and immortal, but man disobeyed the only command given him, and from that disobedience came death and sorrow and suffering, not only to himself, but to all other forms of life then existing and those which were to come. From this curse, there was no redemption until the Son of God came in human form, and, taking all man's sins upon Him, suffered a disgraceful death that man might be delivered from the curse pronounced upon Adam and his descendants when he was driven out of the Garden of Eden.

One further doctrine was much insisted upon: that as in Adam all sinned and were condemned to death, so in Christ, all would live again, if they would only confess Christ crucified and accept the sacrifice which He had made for them; and that those who did, when this world and all the unconverted were destroyed, would be resurrected and enter into a state of never-ending bliss and felicity.

That all this is capable of a very different interpretation—one bringing it more into line with reason and with the results of scientific investigation and philosophic thinking—thanks to Theosophy, we are many of us beginning to realize; but the fact remains that up to twenty years ago this was the commonly accepted belief of the Christian community, and is still the belief of the great majority of those comprising it.

Science has been persecuted for centuries, and until recently was the possession of the more educated classes only. During the last half century, it began to be more widely known, more generally believed in, and its conclusions more plainly and more forcibly stated, until at last it resulted in what has been called the Materialistic Philosophy.

Geology showed conclusively that the sedimentary crust of the earth must have taken millions of years to form, and that not only had Creation not been accomplished in seven days, but that wide intervals of time must have elapsed between the appearance of one organism and that of the next higher type.

Astronomy showed that the sun, moon and stars, if formed solely for the earth's benefit, were created at a vast waste of energy and material; some of them being so far away that it required millions of

years for their light to reach the earth, almost all of them being far greater in size, and the earth, if visible from them at all, must appear as the minutest speck of dust.

Biology demonstrated that all forms of life could be arranged according to an easily graduated scale of increasing complexity, from the humble microscopical one-celled organism up to the delicately organized, thinking man.

And embryology, to complete the case, showed each individual man, before birth, running through all the main type forms, from the microscopical germ to the perfectly developed infant man.

What wonder, then, when so many of the old beliefs were shown to be false and not in accordance with facts, that it should have been assumed that the others were false also? The human mind, so long shackled in the fetters of dogmatism, at first revelled in the freedom which it had attained, and strayed hither and thither, following first one and then another fascinating line of research, piling one array of facts on another, until it seemed that shortly there would be nothing left to discover.

Then began the synthesizing of the various sciences into what has been called the philosophy of materialism, which declares that the universe and all within it is made up of matter and motion, motion

taking only a secondary place as something inhering in matter. According to Clodd:—"At the beginning of the present universe, matter was a diffused vaporous mass, unequally distributed throughout space. Force, acting on the unstableness of that mass, drew its particles together, and the resulting collision set up two new modes of motion: (1) the molar, causing the several masses into which the particles had gathered to spin around in an orbit; and (2) the molecular, causing a swing-like motion among the particles, which motion was diffused as light, heat, etc. The masses into which the primitive nebula was broken up became sidereal or solar systems, each of which, like the parent mass, threw off, as it was indrawn toward its common centre of gravity, masses which became planets, and from these were detached, in like manner, masses which became moons. Both in its shape and general condition, the earth gives proof of this passage from the gaseous to the solid state. As one of the smaller bodies, it long ago ceased to shine by its own light, but a vast period elapsed before it became cool enough to form a crust and to condense the vapors that swathed it into primeval oceans. The simplest compounds of its elements were formed first, the combinations becoming more and more complex, until they reached that subtle form called 'protoplasm,'

which is the 'physical basis of life,' and which, starting in water as a structureless jelly, has reached its fullest development in man. The organic is dependent on the inorganic, and mind is the highest product of the action of motion upon matter. From the action of mind on mind has arisen the social evolution to which, in a supreme degree, is owing the progress of man in knowledge, whereby he has subdued the earth."

This is what materialism has to say with regard to the origin of the universe, nature and man. Their destiny, so far as materialism can see it, is "that as the motion of the different planetary bodies gets slower and slower, they will gravitate to their suns, and so on until the matter of the universe, with intermediate outburst of energy, becomes cold, inert and solid." Then will come the ultimate transference of all energy to the ethereal medium, and there will be an end to all existing visible things, and matter will be once again "a diffused vaporous mass unequally distributed throughout space," waiting for force to act once again on its unstableness, and start it once again on its eternal pilgrimage.

To what end? one may well ask; but materialism has nothing to say in reply. Indeed it has nothing to say of many other things, as for instance:

(1) What started the primary force which drew the

particles together into nebulæ, stars, suns, and planets?

(2) What differentiated the primordial atoms into the seventy known elements?

(3) Whence arose the beginning of life—that power which gives capacity for growth, nutrition and reproduction?

(4) What changed capacity for growth into capacity for sensation?

(5) By what process was capacity for sensation developed into capacity for thinking?

(6) Why should we try to develop that capacity for thinking to its highest possible extent, if at death it is to be lost?

(7) Why strive to continue the race if the gradual cooling of this planet is to make life on it impossible?

Materialism has neglected two of the main axioms of science, viz.: "Out of nothing, nothing is made," and "The stream can rise no higher than its source." All the things we see around us could not have come into manifestation unless they already existed in latency; they could not have come into visibility, unless in some invisible form they had an eternal existence. Mind, as the topmost wave of the stream of evolution, could not have reached so high, unless the source from which it came were higher, or, at any rate, as high.

In metaphysics, as expounded by Kant, and further elaborated by Schopenhauer and others, who either consciously or unconsciously have followed in the footsteps of the Vedantins, the world and all material things are an illusion; the only reality is will, which, through a mistaken notion, desires to manifest itself, and passing outwards from the centre towards the circumference, divides and subdivides until—at its limit of separateness—it fills space with a warring, clashing, attracting and repelling host of homogeneous ultimate physical atoms. Turning inwards again, the process of unification begins, large numbers of these subdivided units of will giving up their personal desire to live, in order that higher forms of will may be manifested, and the chemical elements are formed, which are drawn closer and closer together into nebulæ, stars, suns and planets.

Then the will to live takes another form, to quote Professor Huxley:—"This stuff (matter), when not purified by the lustration of fire, rots uncleanly into something we call life; this vile putrescence of the dust, used as we are to it, yet strikes us with an occasional disgust. In two main shapes this eruption covers the face of the earth: the vegetable rooted to the spot; the animal coming detached out of its native mud, and scurrying abroad with the myriad feet

of insects or towering into heaven. To what passes with the anchored vermin we have little clue, but of the locomotary, to which we ourselves belong, we can tell more. These share with us a thousand miracles—sight, hearing, projection of sound, things that bridge space, the miracle of memory, instinct, the miracle of reproduction, with its imperious desires and staggering consequences. And, to put the last touch upon this last mountain mass of the revolting, all these prey on each other, lives tearing other lives in pieces, cramming them inside themselves, and by that summary process growing fat. . . . . What a monstrous spectre is this Man, the disease of the agglutinated dust, lifting alternate feet, or drugged with slumber, killing, feeding, growing, bringing forth small copies of himself!"

And so the "will to live" goes on, until, realizing the mistake it has been making, it changes from will active to will passive; recognizing that all manifested things are an illusion, that all desire for knowledge or sensation is an error of the "will," which can only bring sorrow and suffering and misery, it ceases to desire to manifest itself, and, resuming its original latent condition, reaches the centre again! Just so much and no more, have metaphysicians to tell us! We asked for bread, and they have hurled at us this stone of a pessimistic philosophy.

Religion, science and metaphysics having all proved themselves, when taken alone, incapable of solving the problems which have so much perplexed us—and which we must solve or perish—what shall we do? Shall we exclaim, as thousands—perhaps millions—have done before us: "Let us eat, drink, and be merry, for to-morrow we die!" or shall we examine the claims of Theosophy, which many have found helpful?

To those who have studied it as a last forlorn hope, it seems like the first faint brightening of the coming dawn, a feeble whispering indistinctly heard, which gradually peals out into an unmistakable "Everlasting Yea." To them it seems that the dawn has broadened out into glorious sunlight; the missing key-piece of the puzzle picture has been found; life, which seemed such an evil thing, has become a process of marvelous beauty; and although the end to which all things are working may not yet be seen in its totality, yet they realize—at first theoretically, then logically, and last of all from their own knowledge—that the soul of man is the one reality in him, which, eternal in its essential nature, strives ever towards a fuller, nobler, more glorious manifestation of itself, until, grown strong in knowledge, in power, and in wisdom, it attains the goal of its striving and becomes self-consciously united with the Divine All-Consciousness.

If Theosophy can do all this—and we claim that it can—if it can give back to man not only his belief in the soul, but can show him how to prove its existence for himself; if it can demonstrate the reality of the states of consciousness after death, and show how the gulf between one life and the next is bridged and the total gains of experience in one life are carried forward into another; if it can show how the universe is governed by rigid law operated by conscious entities—all lesser laws, and those who put them in execution, being unified, subordinated, and correlated by higher ones, until they are all embraced in and form portions of One Universal Unity, which the Christians call God, and the Hindus Brahm, and whose attributes are Being, Bliss and Consciousness —then the need for all men to know of it is demonstrated.

CHAPTER II.

The Message of Theosophy.

TO the "man in the street," who has not the time nor the inclination to study, Theosophy seems to be a "large, loose, yearnful semblance of a stupendous shade," or "a great, blubbery, shapeless idea, which crawls with a beneficent intent upon its stomach all the days of its life, and never arrives at any defined place or purpose;" and looked at from this point of view, in which nothing has any reality that does not appeal to either his appetites, his emotions, or his passions, he is perhaps quite correct.

But to those who are not content to go through the world like animals, satisfied so long as they are fed, clothed, sheltered, and not worked too hard, looking out with glassy, unrecognizing eye upon this fleeting show of things called life, flitting like butterflies for one brief moment over the sunlit waves, the next hurried away, torn, crumpled, and draggled wrecks in the waters of oblivion, it is otherwise. For those who wish to understand a little of the Universe they see around them, the Nature they are the productions of, and the men they are, Theosophy has a meaning, a purpose, and a message.

To put it briefly, it is this:—That the universe is a limited, temporary, changing, partial manifestation, in space and time, of an infinite, eternal, changeless Whole or Unity—something which, to our limited intellects, transcends the power of human expression or similitude, but which is none the less real for all that. In nature, Theosophy sees the sum total of those invisible forces and powers, known to us only, as yet, by the effects they produce—effects so undeviating, so exact, that we have come to speak of them as the results of the action of the laws of nature. Of man it says that, in essence, in his very inmost being, he is an indivisible portion of this beforementioned Eternal Reality, as yet almost unconscious of who and what he is, but still capable, if he so wills it, of changing this state of apparent separateness and unconsciousness into one of complete self-consciousness and union with the Divine, from which, in reality, he has never been separated. This inner man, this essential self, of which the physical man we see is a temporary manifestation or reflection, is sometimes spoken of as the Soul, the Reality, or "thing in itself," the individual behind the mask which we speak of as the "personality."

Perhaps, before proceeding any further, it may be well to explain what we mean by reality and what we mean by soul.

Reality, we are using to express that which is eternal, indestructible and unchangeable, back of all the temporary, destructible, changing forms we see around us. It may be questioned if all these things which we see about us had a beginning in time; and if they are, with space itself, an illusion of our senses, what certainty have we that there is any permanent reality back of them?

There is and can be only one answer. Religion, science, and metaphysics are all agreed on this; and, although they arrive at their conclusions from different points of view, they admit that, without postulating an Eternal Reality behind all temporary appearances, it would be utterly impossible to give any reasonable explanation for the existence of either the universe, nature or man.

Metaphysics asks for an eternal, indestructible, unchanging will; science calls for the indestructibility of matter and the conservation of energy; religion for an eternal, omnipotent, omniscient God, from whom all the manifested universe has proceeded. Theosophists are, then, going contrary to none of them when they claim that—before our temporary universe came into manifestation, before it came from a state of *almost* absolute passivity or latency into a succeeding series of states of greater and greater activity, definiteness of form, and conscious-

ness of purpose—there existed a universal principle, infinite, eternal, and in essence unchangeable, containing within itself the sum total of experience gained in past universes and all the potentialities of the universe which now is, as well as those which are to be in the future, waiting only for the time to change those potentialities into actualities; to turn consciousness unconscious of itself into complete self-consciousness. If you want an analogy for the difference between this universal principle at the beginning of a period of manifestation and at the close of the same, take that of the consciousness of a man at birth, and the consciousness of the same man after living a long life; divested of his manifold temporary garments, he is the same centre of consciousness—there is no difference except in the amount of experience gained, the higher degree of self-consciousness attained.

This is the sense, then, in which we are using the word *soul*: as a centre of consciousness, *eternal*, indestructible, and in essence unchangeable, with three potentialities—a potentiality to manifest as idea or consciousness; a potentiality to manifest as force or energy carrying out that idea; and a potentiality to manifest as concrete form, or physical matter embodying that idea. It may be used for the soul of the universe; the soul of a solar system; the soul of

a planet; the soul of an atom; the soul of a vegetable cell, with all the possibilities of variation shown in the vegetable kingdom; the soul of an animal cell, capable of evolving through all the linked series of type forms from the jelly-fish to the animal man; or the soul of reasoning, thinking man, a centre of consciousness just beginning to realize that there is a possibillty of attaining to self-consciousness.

To deny the existence of the soul, when used in this sense, would be as impossible as to deny the existence of a First Cause. Neither materialism, metaphysics, nor religion has been able to do this. Materialism says it is matter; metaphysics says it is will or force; religion says it is God or consciousness; Theosophy says it is something beyond all these, unknowable, and incapable of comprehension by our finite limited brain-intellects in its real, essential, eternal nature, but known to us when in manifestation by its three temporary aspects—Matter, Force and Consciousness.

There is only one way in which we can gain any comprehension of the manner in which the Infinite, Eternal Idea becomes the limited temporary manifested form or forms, and that is by correspondence and analogy. Let us take the evolution of any form, from the most simple to the most complex, in the

animal kingdom; a fresh centre of consciousness is first set up, an idea focalized around a certain definite point, a little cell, one five-hundredth part of an inch in diameter. This has within it or around it that which gives it the possibility of becoming a separate, living organic form, providing that it is first of all fertilized—a process which arouses its latent force into activity to collect and mould organic matter to its will—and that it is secondly supplied with the necessary conditions and materials for such growth. Its first stage is a process for collecting of material, crystallization and subdivision, until the ovum is a compact mass of homogeneous cells. Further than this it cannot go, until some fresh impulse is given to it; this it receives on fertilization, and it has now a capacity for absorption, formation on a definite plan, and specialization of organs for definite purposes, strangely analogous to the essential features of vegetative life. A further stage is reached at birth, when the new personality may be said to pass from the vegetative to the animal stage. If it received no additional impulse from without, the probabilities are that the new entity would be incapable of sentient life, would be in fact still-born, for there is nothing in the mere fact of separation from the parent organism to make it become a self-motived living being. This third impulse is given by the ad-

dition to it, or the taking possession of it by, a soul, which awakens in it a centre of individual consciousness.

So by analogy, we say that the Universal Unity—that which contains within itself all the potentialities of matter, force and consciousness—vibrating from its centre toward its circumference, creates difference where before all was alike; the One becomes many, until, at its furthest limit of separation, result innumerable atoms of physical matter, incapable of further subdivision, these being drawn, in the process of time, around definite centres of energy, forming nebulæ, suns, and planets. A second impulse, vibrating outwards from the centre, brings to each separated plane of the universe, solar system and planet, the capacity to produce living forms; whilst the third outgoing impulse is the manifestation of the conscious aspect of the Universal Unity—the awakening in the separated portions of itself of intellect, consciousness or mind. So the Universal Unity becomes the separated planes of the Kosmos; separated further, it becomes the multiplicity of solar nebulæ, which gradually condense and are formed into central suns and their more or less numerous planets. Each of these has a material or form aspect, the central nucleus or earth; a force, energy or vitality aspect, which binds the ultimate atoms into compound ele-

ments, into molecules, particles and crystals, that which is the vitalizing principle in the cell and all the concrete forms which evolve from it; and last of all a conscious aspect, interpenetrating and containing both the others, that which uses the force aspect of itself to bind the material aspect into a certain definite expression of itself. This is the creator, preserver and destroyer of the form it ensouls, whether it is used in a universal, solar, planetary, organic or atomic sense. It is that which contains the potentialities of all its subsequent manifestations within itself, that which conserves all the experiences gained, and that which remains in existence when all the forms which it has ensouled have ceased to be.

Having shown the necessity for soul, in all the many forms which manifestation takes, it follows naturally that if the soul of everything else in the universe is in essence eternal, then the soul in man must be eternal also. But there is an evident difference between that manifestation of the eternal which we call a man, and those other manifestations we call animals, vegetables, minerals, and those stages which lie on the other side of the mineral. To what is this difference to be ascribed?

Theosophy answers that the soul is seven-principled in its constitution, has the capacity of manifesting on seven planes, and of developing seven vehicles

or bodies, through which it can work and become conscious on those seven planes; that in the mineral only a few of these principles are manifested, the others being yet latent; that in the vegetable there is another one, more or less developed; that the animal is striving to perfect still another; and that when man reaches the pinnacle of his development, the whole seven will be fully manifested.

It is self-evident that a process of such magnitude could not be completed in one earth-life, and this coming again into bodies of flesh is called Reincarnation. As to the particular law under which each man develops his faculties and powers, Theosophy has no room for accident nor favor, and holds that each effect must have had its corresponding cause, that what we reap is most certainly that which we have sown. This law it is which is generally spoken of as Karma.

Of the states of consciousness in which man finds himself after death and before birth, each life period or progress through the three lower planes,—which are all that he at present functions in—may be compared to a little circle, forming an intrinsic and necessary part of an infinitely greater one, like a bead on a necklace, or like one coil of a circular spiral spring.

The principles of man bring him into relation with,

and correspond to, what may be called the principles or planes of the planet he lives on; and a knowledge of these will give him, by analogy, some idea of the corresponding planes of the solar system; and so on and on, like the ever-widening concentric ripples resulting from a stone thrown into the middle of a lake, we can suppose his consciousness taking a wider and even wider range outwards towards the Infinite and Eternal All-Consciousness.

CHAPTER III.

The Vestures of the Soul.

AN Eastern allegory has compared the manifestations of that Eternal Unknown Essence of which all the visible things around us are composed, to the rays of light shining out from a lamp placed in an earthen vessel pierced with holes. The rays we see appear to be separate, appear not to have any connection with one another; and yet they are all manifestations of one light. Supposing each hole to have inserted in it a differently colored piece of glass, then the separateness, the individuality of each ray, would become still more pronounced. If we removed the glass, and did away with the containing vessel, we should find the one light still remaining.

So it is with the universe; all those temporary manifestations, which we classify under the terms matter, force and consciousness, are the apparently separated aspects of the One Eternal Life or Light. Although we cannot know this Eternal Reality in its unmanifested state, cannot conceive of anything approaching to what it is in its real essential nature, we can know some little of the forms produced from it, when periodically it swings outwards into mani-

festation, and produces in and from itself the visible universe—a temporary form emanating from, sustained by, and finally absorbed into a more permanent Reality, of which it is the reflection or manifestation in space and time.

From the infinitely great to the infinitely small we see the same law hold, the solar system being a miniature reflection of the universe, the planet a still smaller reflection of the solar system; until finally we get the atom, an infinitely little world mirroring in itself the universe. This is the material aspect only. But there is another one, that which is the motive force, shaping this material into definite forms, combining the atoms into molecules, molecules into particles, particles into definite crystal forms. Investigators like Tyndall and Ruskin, who have made a study of crystals, who have watched them building themselves always along certain definite lines, rejecting the particles which are not the kind they want, and arranging those they select into forms of the greatest beauty and symmetry, have been struck with wonder, and have almost been persuaded that the crystal was a living entity. Science teaches that in all matter—even in that which seems the hardest and most inert, such as a piece of steel or a diamond—the atoms are not lifeless things, fastened together, piled one on top of another, but

each one floats free of the other, and vibrates ceaselessly within a certain limited sphere. So it really requires no great stretch of the imagination to think of them as being alive. Then, apart from the atom itself, there is this certain something which moulds atoms to a definite crystal form; a something which is not destroyed when the crystal it has built is dissolved. For, give it time and opportunity, and it will again proceed to build those particles into just such another crystal.

Passing from the mineral to the vegetable kingdom, we see the same fact of an underlying reality, which builds up matter into definite shapes, gathers particles into a cell, unites cells into an organism, sets portions of that organism to gather nutriment, other portions to build the matter thus collected into branches and leaves, flowers and seeds, passing on to these latter the potentiality of producing other organisms similar to itself.

A stage further, exhibiting a higher range of powers, we find the organisms of the animal kingdom. From insect to man, the animal, as Huxley puts it, "shares with us a thousand miracles, sight, hearing, projection of sound, the miracle of memory, and the power of reproducing its species."

But there is that in man which is not to be found in any animal, near as some approach to it; namely,

intellect—mind—expressing some faint idea of self-consciousness. This quality may be called the manifestation of the third aspect of the Eternal Reality, the result of the third out-breathing of the Divine Life, the consciousness trying to work out its proper nature. As Browning well puts it in Paracelsus—

> "To ascertain its rank and final place,
> For these things still tend upwards—progress is
> The Law of Life—man's self is not yet man."

Or, as another writer has expressed it—"Every ultimate atom in the universe either has been, is, or tends to become, man."

But there is an evident difference between that temporary manifestation of the Eternal which we call a man, and those other temporary manifestations we call animals, vegetables, minerals, and those stages which lie on the other side of the mineral. To what is this difference to be ascribed?

The nucleus of a crystal, a fern seed, an insect's egg, the beginnings of all forms of animal life, up to and including man, differ very little in size, form, or chemical constitution from one another. Why is it the resulting organisms vary so much? If all are in essence the same, if that soul principle which underlies them all is the same, and contains the same potentialities, why do we see such evident differences among them?

If we tried to account for these differences by materialistic theories alone, we should fail. The lesser can never include the greater; matter from itself can never produce mind; although it is quite possible that mind, or that which transcends mind, may produce matter.

Professor Crookes' illustration of the way in which matter, as we know it, has been formed from ether, is a splendid illustration of the way in which the soul manifests by means of the vehicles it evolves for itself. He supposes a mass of ultimate atoms vibrating at an extremely high rate of speed, and forming, as they gradually swing outwards through space, different elements, as their rate of vibration sinks below a definite point. We can suppose that in this way all the gaseous forms of all the elements known to us were produced.

Vibrating still at a high rate of speed, these forms of matter would be invisible, intangible to us; but, as their motion became slower and slower, they would gradually pass into the liquid and then into the solid state. Even here, as we have seen in the hardest, most solid, and apparently most inert forms of matter, there is still motion, and if we attempt to conceive what would be the result if we could reduce that state of motion still more—if we could bring it down to nothing, or almost nothing—the only con-

clusion we can come to is that it would be something still more dense and solid than any form of matter yet known to us.

Matter, then, is composed of atoms, varying in constitution and appearance according to the rate of its vibration. What, then, is an atom? So far as we can understand it, an atom is a centre around which certain forces move, producing the appearance of an atomic form. You are familiar with that toy in which a bent piece of wire is placed, and which, when whirled at a high rate of speed, produces an apparently solid form. So long as the motion is kept up the form persists; when the motion ceases the form has vanished. This, it appears to me, is the case with all the forms we know of, from the nebulæ to the grain of sand, and from the humble one-celled moneron, through all forms of organized life, to man.

The three attributes which we can ascribe to that essence which we call the soul are substance, force and consciousness. These attributes we have no alternative but to suppose exist in it eternally, cannot be taken away from nor added to it, although they may at one time exist only in potentiality, and at others show all the varying stages, from almost complete latency, passivity, or unconsciousness, up to complete manifestation, activity, or self-consciousness.

The soul, the centre, in all forms is the same; the substance of which they are composed is the same essentially; the differences we see in them can therefore only be ascribed either to the difference in capacity to respond to the vibrations of the different forces brought to play upon the atoms composing them, or to the difference in the stages of progress to which any particular centres of consciousness have reached in their journey from unconsciousness up to self-consciousness.

A centre of consciousness which has reached only to the atomic stage, on the physical plane, can manifest only that side of itself which we call the material aspect. Under the control of a centre which has reached a stage higher than itself, it can be combined with others like itself to form a material molecule; these molecules are combined into crystals, and all stages of crystal life make up what we call the mineral kingdom. The soul, the centre of consciousness, of any particular crystal, may be said to have manifested two of its potentialities, two of its principles—that of the material body and that of the etheric body, which holds the other together. In the vegetable cell and all the linked series of forms in the vegetable kingdom, we find a capacity to manifest still another principle, to respond to vibrations of a higher rate than those shown in the mineral. This prin-

ciple gives the power of assimilation, growth and reproduction—those phenomena generally classed under the name of vitality, and therefore often spoken of by theosophical writers as the pranic or vital principle.

In the forms classed under the name of the animal kingdom, we find a capacity to respond to still subtler vibrations—those which produce the sensations of sight, hearing, touch, taste and smell. Unless there were some such definite principle, the vibrations of light, sound, etc., playing on an organism, would meet with no response; just as in a sleeping animal they do not. The animal is apparently the same animal, whether awake or asleep; but in the one case the vibrations of light and sound produce an effect; in the other they do not, and unless there be some principle active when the animal is awake and passive when it is asleep, there will be no difference.

This principle it is which accounts for the animal having the power to move about, to strive for certain things it perceives, which memory tells it are pleasant and agreeable, and to avoid certain things which it knows from experience are painful. In Theosophical literature, this principle is often called the astral body, and as it vibrates in response to impulses which are at present beyond the range of scientific instruments, we can only suppose it to be composed

of as much finer, subtler a substance than the etheric body, as that, in its turn, is finer and subtler than the physical body. Just as the etheric body encloses and interpenetrates the physical body, so does the astral enclose and interpenetrate both of them.

The animal is seldom able to respond to vibrations of a higher kind than those connected with sensation; but in man we find that there is another factor, principle, or body, to take into consideration, which makes the least developed man different, in some degree, from the most highly evolved animal. This is that faculty variously called intellect, reason, or mind; it cannot be said to be an attribute of any of the lower bodies, for it controls and uses those.

When a man thinks, he sets the subtle matter of which the mind body is composed vibrating; providing there is matter there of the right degree of tenuity, capable of answering to such vibration, or of expressing the idea he wants to convey. He thus produces a picture, in sound, form, and color, on the mental plane, or in the subtle particles of his mind body. If this vibration is of sufficient persistence or intensity, it sets up a corresponding vibration in the astral body, arousing a desire to say something, do something, or look for something. The astral, in its turn, sets the matter of the etheric body vibrating, which directs to the organs, limbs or

muscles concerned, a stream of force, setting them in motion. So in the opposite direction, vibrations coming from outside, impinging on the physical sense organs, are translated into vibrations in the matter of the etheric body, through the nerves; this, reaching the centre of astral perception, sets up a corresponding vibration in it, to be in turn passed on to the mind body, and decided upon by the entity itself as knowledge that it sees, hears, smells, touches or tastes a certain thing.

The three highest principles of the soul are what are generally spoken of as the real individual, the Higher Self or reincarnating Ego, into which is built all the sum total of the experiences gained during any one life—experiences which become the causes brought to bear upon its subsequent incarnations. Taken together as one, and called, on this account, the Causal Body, they may be regarded as a trinity in unity, having a permanent existence, in the spiritual world at any rate, throughout one cycle of manifestation; and this trinity periodically emanates a ray of itself, to ensoul a body of flesh for the purpose of gaining further experience. Looked at from the point of view of one who has attained to anything like what we conceive of as human perfection, a man would appear as a solid, physical nucleus, in a composite, vibrating shell,

formed of matter of differing degrees of subtlety, or density, changing form and color in response to the vibration of the forces flowing through it from that more permanent Reality of which it is the reflection upon the physical plane. Or it might seem as the centre of a composite vortex, formed by three rapidly vibrating streams of forces on the descending arc (coming downwards from spirit into matter), and three on the ascending arc (matter being transmuted into spirit).

This process of densification of spirit into matter, and of transmutation of matter into spirit, is what all organisms, whether conscious or unconscious, are engaged in. Man, as we see him, is, as it were, a temporary flower on the tree of life, whose eternal roots, though invisible to us, most surely exist in the superphysical regions, and form that Soul of which all the vestures we have been considering are but the emanations or temporary manifestations.

CHAPTER IV.

The Continuity of Consciousness.

MATTER, as it is known to us, is so full of life, is so evidently the visible garment of an intangible force, that at first we are inclined to think that all the forms we see are only passing phenomena or manifestations of force, and to agree with Schopenhauer that the Universe is only an expression of will—the great Cosmic Will to Live. But when we examine the problem more closely, we find there is another factor which must be taken into account, for force—motion—unless it has something to guide it, some definite channels into which to flow, would tend to move all in the one direction—that in which there was least resistance—and we must have the idea, the consciousness, the intelligent continuing entity, to initiate, guide, and conserve the forces whose manifestations we see as material forms.

Even in our small affairs we see that this is so; we originate an idea, which brings into activity the force side of our nature, and with that we gather material with which to make this idea manifest to ourselves; and after the forms we have made, or the words we have spoken, have disappeared, we have

gained something which we retain as memory. So in the building of a Universe, a solar system, a planet, a molecule, or an atom, it seems logically necessary that the idea must have existed first, becoming a centre from which emanate forces attracting substance around itself and building it into concrete forms; and which, after the form it evolved has disappeared and the energy it used has been dissipated, remains the same idea, plus the experience gained by the effort.

So we can suppose that, at the dawn of a new period of manifestation, the Universal Spirit awakes to activity, and that which is conscious in it separates from that which is unconscious. Thus we have the first differentiation of spirit and matter, "the Spirit of God moving upon the face of the waters," and sending out a thought, a ray, or vibration, which clothes itself in cosmic substance, as an infinite cosmic atom, a monad of form, composed of and containing the intelligence, the energy and the substance from which the Universe is to be evolved. This substance is as yet so immaterial that the only thing we can compare to it is light.

Light is produced by extremely rapid vibrations in the cosmic ether, and if a ray of white light is passed through an instrument that lessens the rate of vibration, the one ray splits up into seven colored

rays. Imagine this to be done with the cosmic light, and we should have an immense globe of living light, composed of seven colors, interpenetrating, and yet distinct from one another, forming in their totality a vast cosmic nebula, composed of substance vibrating at seven different rates of speed, what have often been called the seven cosmic planes. The one atom thus becomes a sevenfold atom, and from or in this radiates millions of rays, monads or intelligences. These are now awakened to a period of renewed activity, each one striving to manifest itself to itself, each one having become a centre of energy—a sun receiving vibrations from its parent sun, which it translates and transmutes into terms of its own vibration, also in a sevenfold manner. This energy it radiates throughout itself from its centre to its circumference, awakening the latent atoms of which it is composed to a new cycle of activity, and building them into a body for itself; the vibrations as they pass downwards, or outwards, getting slower and slower, molding more and more concrete images of the idea striven to be expressed, until solar systems, planets, and the physical molecules and atoms of the chemist result, the last named being compound bodies, having for their soul a real cosmic atom, the ultimate subdivision of the monad of form, which by this body mirrors in itself the universe.

The second cosmic vibration—the great life wave—awakes to activity that principle of the atoms on all planes which may be called the desire to live, to experience sensation, to create, to mold the already existing matter into organic forms. What these may be like on subtler planes than the physical we are not at present concerned with, but on the physical plane, beginning with the existing monads of form, the physical atoms, these monads of life become the vitalizing principles which mold the physical atoms into a body for themselves, in which they strive to manifest themselves, to evolve their potentialities into actualities. Each monad of life becomes the continuing principle, carrying forward from one form to another the experience gained in it; thus, by degrees, learning to build a more and more perfect instrument for itself, until man's physical form is evolved. These continuing, progressive, vital monads supply the missing links in the materialistic scheme of evolution; for just as, according to Newton's first law of motion, "Every body perseveres in its state of rest, or of moving uniformly in a straight line, except in so far as it is made to change that state by external forces," so without some external forces impelling the form to a more perfect expression of the innate idea—the potentiality—it would always remain a potentiality, and would never become an actuality.

The first forms of organic life, vitalized by the inflowing energy from the monads of life on the planes higher than the physical, differed very little from the atomic forms, being minute globes of living protoplasm, with the added capacity of attracting other inorganic particles to themselves, building them into the composition of their own bodies, vitalizing them, and separating portions of their own substance from themselves to lead an independent existence. But each form thus produced could only be a repetition of the parent form, and without some continuing principle that did not perish when the form it had vitalized had perished, but which had evolved in the organism, become involved in the germ of the new form, and carried forward the experience gained, there could have been no evolution.

Through long ages the evolution of the physical form progressed, and the forms existing to-day are the lineal descendants of the humble moneron, the one-celled organism of a million years ago. Each individual form, whether vegetable, animal, or human, starts, apparently, at the same stage; is composed, so far as chemistry can find out, of much the same chemical constituents; and yet, side by side, we see specimens of the simplest and of the most complex forms. Why do some stop at the first stage, whilst others go on to the furthest?

So far as can be seen, it is this: The monads of form, the atoms composing any organism, have gained the capacity to respond to vibrations from the monads of life, corresponding to the stage reached by the organism of which they form a part. So any atom, composing either a man or a jelly-fish, if put in a suitable environment, and supplied with the necessary and proper kind of material, would respond readily to vibrations from the monads of life, just so far as the experience of its parent organism had gone, while any further impulse or higher vibration would meet with but very little response; but that little, which might be called experience in the organism, would become faculty or capacity to respond to vibrations of this kind in the atoms composing it.

The monads of life pour out their experience as vibrations into any fresh centre set up, and evolve in it just such another organism as they last occupied or ensouled. This organism has to struggle to maintain its existence in the midst of many conflicting forces—to adapt itself to its environment or perish in the attempt. According to Newton's "Second Law," "change of motion is proportionate to the impressed force, and takes place in the direction in which the force is impressed;" and if the monad of life, in its effort to maintain in existence the organism it has evolved for itself, finds further force ne-

cessary than was before required, it will by continual striving gradually succeed in supplying it, and the organism thus altered will stand more chance of continued existence and of transmitting the peculiarities it has gained to its descendants than one which perished sooner in the struggle.

Then, according to Newton's "Third Law," "Reaction is always equal and opposite to action—that is to say, the actions of two bodies upon each other are always equal and in opposite directions." The action of the monads of life on the monads of form, while pushing them a stage forward, results also in a corresponding reaction by the monads of form on the monads of life. Necessity for increased effort, if the life is to succeed in keeping the form it ensouls in existence, results in action by life on the form, and a corresponding reaction by form on the life. Thus, by increased inflowing of energy from what may be called the vital plane, the atoms of the physical plane, the monads of form, evolve the capacity to respond to higher and higher rates of vibration, until they become, in their turn, monads of life; while the monads of life reach to higher and higher expressions of themselves, until the perfection of organism is attained, and they are ready to pass to the stage where they can become self-conscious entities, monads of mind—the conscious, intelligent principle

animating a man. But they can only do this by the playing upon them of forces or vibrations from entities on higher planes than the one on which they themselves are; just as animals, or the souls or monads incarnated in animals, receive from man the impulse which awakens in them the hitherto dormant intellectual principle; and with the capacity to respond to vibrations from the mental plane they become monads of mind, instead of monads of life, and in their future progress in succeeding cycles of existence, the faculty they will be striving to develop will be the faculty of understanding—not, as it has been in the past, the faculty of sensation—the main desire moving them will be the desire to know—not, as it used to be, the desire to live.

It is at this point that reincarnation is generally said to begin; but it seems far more logical to suppose that reincarnation is not something which applies only to the human kingdom, but that it is universal in its application, and may refer to the coming back, into visibility, of the soul, in any of its multitudinous stages. It may be a monad of form manifesting on any of the seven planes of the universe as a substance; or, a stage higher, it may be a monad of life—often spoken of as an elemental—manifesting also on any of the seven planes, and molding for itself bodies out of the substance of those

planes; or, a stage higher still, it may be a monad of mind, a more or less self-conscious entity, striving, by means of the bodies built by the elementals, or monads of life, to reach to a higher degree of self-consciousness.

There is a correspondence all down the line. The unprogressed monads of mind, when they descend into incarnation, are attracted to and arouse vibrations corresponding to their own in elementals of low development, who, in their turn, are attracted to parents at much the same stage of development, who can best supply the sort of materials needed for the new physical body; whilst the more progressed monads are drawn by affinity to lives and forms which are themselves more progressed.

We have an analogy for this in the phenomena of thought transference. All space around us is full of vibrations, representing thoughts consciously or unconsciously sent out by other people; but they awaken no corresponding vibration except in those whose minds are tuned to that key or are vibrating at that particular rate, and where this is the case one becomes conscious of a thought, which he feels impelled to give expression to, or bring into manifestation. A further analogy, and one capable of better proof, is to be found in the new device for telegraphy without wires, where a message sent from

one instrument vibrating at a particular rate, can be received on all similar instruments vibrating at the same rate, within range of that force.

The process of human reincarnation, as far as we can see it, is somewhat as follows: The ego, the human monad, having assimilated, unified and built into its own constitution all the experiences belonging to it from a former incarnation, sends out a ray, or wave of activity, which draws around itself the atoms of its own plane of such degree of coarseness or fineness as respond readily to this particular rate of vibration; and thus is formed the mind body. Descending then to the next lower plane, the astral, all those experiences belonging to that plane which had remained unexhausted, and had passed into latency in its upward progress, are brought again into manifestation, drawing to themselves astral matter in which to express themselves. It is then drawn by natural and magnetic affinity to a suitable infant body, which has already been built up by a monad of life, through the best-suited parents.

During infancy, to the eye of a clairvoyant, the mental and astral bodies of a child are almost colorless and very rudimentary; but, as the child gets older and capable of responding to a wider range of vibration, more and more energy flows downward from the real ego, the continuing entity, whose abode

is always on the mental plane, and they increase in definiteness of outline and beauty of coloring. At an age varying between three and seven years, the child becomes self-conscious—not in the fullest sense of the word, of course, but self-conscious as a personality—and evolves or unfolds a character in strict accordance with the causes flowing into it from the more permanent ego. It thus gradually becomes a more or less perfect reflection, on the mental, astral, and physical planes, of that ego, and responds most readily to those forces which it has evolved the capacity to respond to, and fails to respond to those of which it has had no experience.

Working with the faculties it has acquired, it strives to gain the knowledge and experience necessary for the building up of a still higher faculty. At the same time, it is hampered by the very vehicles it has to work through and the materials it has to work with, just as a sculptor may have an idea clearly in his mind, and yet, because the tools he has made for himself are not what they should be, and the stone he is working on is too hard, too brittle, or too soft, he cannot make the thing he wants to, until, by experience, he has learnt to make and use the right kinds of tools, and knows the properties of the materials he has to choose from and which is best for his purpose.

Each atom, monad, or soul—using the words to express any centre of intelligence, energy, and substance belonging to any of the seven rays on any plane—responds to the vibrations, the causes flowing through it, in strict accordance with its former evolution; and with every successful effort to vibrate in unison with a higher ray than the one it belongs to, it passes to that ray, and, whether in manifestation or latency, is part of that hierarchy of souls, until by further effort it passes onward. At the end of a cycle of activity all are absorbed, or become latent and homogeneous within the bosom of the Infinite. On re-emerging, they pass rapidly through the stages which lie between the state of unconsciousness or latency in which they then were, up to the point which they had reached in the previous cycle. We have an analogy for this in the production of a human or any other organic form, where we see the entity passing in a few brief months through all the stages, from the undifferentiated speck of protoplasm, until it becomes a miniature copy of its parent form.

In their totality, all souls are the means by which the Universal Spirit manifests the ideas emanating from Itself, and realizes them, thus coming to self-consciousness. Individually, each soul is a mirror of the Universal Mind, reflecting just so much or so

little as in the past it has itself realized and made its own.

And just as only a small portion of our own thoughts, of the contents of our human minds, rises into the light of more or less perfect consciousness, whilst we are ever striving more and more to realize them; so we can assume that all the forms in the manifested universe, all the forces moving in those forms, and all the intelligences of which they are the expressions, are only an infinitesimal portion of the thoughts or ideas of the Universal Spirit, which, with every succeeding cycle of activity, it brings more quickly or more fully from potentiality into activity.

CHAPTER V.

The Law of Causality.

JUST as the Universe is the expression of the One Life, manifesting the ideas of the One Mind in the multitudinous subdivisions and differentiations of the One Substance, so the laws by which these phenomena are produced are all more or less limited expressions of the one Universal Law—the Law of Causality, or Karma, which brings to every efficient cause its adequate effect, and makes every effect the parent of a similar cause. Causality is without attributes; while it is absolute and immutable as a principle, it is we ourselves who propel it to action.

It is often said that a man is helped or hindered by his karma; that a record of all his thoughts, words and deeds is kept by the recorders of karma, and that in each incarnation a body is built for him in strict accordance with the karma he has made.

This may be so, but karma is perhaps better to be understood as the sum total of causes resulting in a given effect; and if the energy a man is able to put forth is of sufficient intensity to mold the forces of nature to his will, if his knowledge is sufficiently far-reaching to enable him to use the cosmic forces

instead of being used by them, the results will be far different in the one case than in the other. Each entity, on any plane, may be regarded as a centre of consciousness, through which flow the cosmic forces, and it responds to just that portion of them with which it is able to vibrate in unison. Those which are beyond the range of its cognizance awaken no response; just as an electric current of extremely high power can be passed through a man's body without his knowing it, whilst a much slower, less powerful current will so disorganize the physical molecules that he will be killed. So, exquisite music will be meaningless to savages, whilst it will awaken far-reaching emotions in the minds of intellectual people.

The light and heat of the sun are sometimes spoken of as the principal causes operating in the germination, growth and development of all living organisms; yet what a different response they meet with, what different effects they produce, in the plant, the animal, and man.

So the monads of life may be regarded as entities in all stages of progress, sending out vibrations of varying intensity—from the very lowest, capable of producing only the simplest organic form, up to those complicated series of energies capable of producing a human form. These vibrations will only

meet with a response in organisms tuned to that particular key; all those above or below a particular range will be non-existent to that organism, and there will be no effect produced except where there is this correspondence and affinity. But where these conditions exist, then we shall have a monad of life establishing a new centre of energy and building up for itself a new organism.

So with the monads of mind, we can conceive that the vibrations they are capable of arousing vary in intensity within wide limits, and that they only are attracted to, and become the informing souls of, those monads of life capable of responding to such vibrations. We can also conceive that there are centres of consciousness, intelligent entities on the higher planes of the Cosmos, whose energies awaken a more or less perfect response in the monads of mind or human beings, and in this way, perhaps, there is an explanation for the many deities of the various world religions.

This is all the more reasonable when we consider the operations of the various forces which move according to what are often called the Laws of Nature.

A force once set up in a given direction tends to persist in that direction forever; but, as it widens outwards from the centre, what it gains in diffusion it loses in intensity, until it passes beyond the bounds

of observation, and from a state of objectivity it passes into a state of subjectivity. When a man wants to move something, he gathers force into a proper, suitable centre, so arranges the force he wants to use and the thing he wants to use it on, that the line of least resistance shall be the way in which he wants the thing to go, and when he perceives that all is in readiness, he discharges the force. But, unless he has arranged for a continual renewal of the supply of force, the action ceases with the discharge of that already collected.

Living organisms, in the strict sense of the words, do not generate forces; they merely attract, store up, specialize and discharge forces already in existence; and they do this by virtue of that principle which transcends both force and its vehicle matter, and that principle is mind. Human laws, written or unwritten, are the expressions of the will of the community coming under them—their ideas of the conditions necessary to be conformed to, if individual life, family life, social life and national life are to be possible; if morality, justice and civilization are to be maintained. If a man living in such a community realizes what these laws are, and acts in accordance with them, he has the assistance of the totality of the wills of the community in which he lives; if he goes contrary to them, he is like a solitary drop of

water trying to go in opposition to the trend of the whole stream.

But it seems evident and necessary to suppose that those manifestations of vitality, sensation and intellect on the part of minerals, vegetables, animals and human beings, in which they seek to manifest their own ideas, to satisfy their own purposes, are, at the same time, the means and instruments of higher intelligences, acting on a larger scale, and with a broader, wider purpose, of which these lower intelligences know nothing. So it may be possible that the laws under which men live, the customs they conform to, and the religions to which they belong, are only partial and distorted reflections of ideas emanating from sources far higher than themselves.

All these energies, these motive forces, flowing down to us from the planes above the mental, we are accustomed to call spiritual, and inasmuch as they tend to raise the entities or monads on the mental plane to a higher level of mentality, we must regard them as emanating from conscious beings, entities a stage higher in the scale of cosmic evolution than men.

In the same manner, the energies flowing downwards from the entities on the mental plane—often called the individuality of man—tend to raise the entities on the astral plane, the monads of life, to a

higher level of vitality; and these, in their turn, tend, by their out-going energies, to raise the monads of form, the entities manifesting as organic matter, to a more perfect expression of the idea they are trying to manifest.

In man, we see an entity, a self-conscious centre, gathering, storing up and using forces to carry out his ideas; but never, except in a secondary sense, generating those forces. Is it very unreasonable, then, to suppose that those forces which are generated, stored up and put into operation by some power greater than his, also emanate from self-conscious centres whose intelligence and range of consciousness far transcend his own?

That these, in their turn, should be only secondary to higher entities than themselves, working with substance of a far subtler, more spiritual, nature; and also that it should be possible to follow this line of reasoning back in thought to a final centre, which shall synthesize, use and permeate all the apparently separated aspects or portions of Itself, is, it seems to me, almost a logical necessity. From this centre will emanate all the primary causes or vibrations, which, as they spread outwards through the cosmic planes, will produce as effects all the varied manifestations of mind and life and form; and, as they return to it, will bring back and synthesize again into causes the essence of the experience gained.

This would seem to be the one law which synthesizes and correlates all the other laws, and of which all the lesser laws are more or less perfect expressions. In every centre of consciousness throughout the universe is the possibility of responding to and manifesting every vibration, from the lowest to the highest; but the capacity to respond depends upon its progress in the past. When any centre vaguely feels the need for further development, and begins to strive after it, it draws around it and awakens to activity other centres of consciousness a stage lower than itself; who, in their turn, send out energies which mould entities still lower than themselves to their will—and so on down the line—and, by so doing, makes them more readily responsive to such impacts of energy. Each one, by having been made the effect of a cause, becomes in its turn the cause of an effect; having once begun to respond to a particular kind of vibration, it responds ever more and more readily to it; and the vehicles through which it manifests these vibrations act ever more and more readily and automatically. But when all that is to be learned in this particular direction has been learned, it endeavors to respond to higher vibrations, and thus is set up an antagonism between the entity and the vehicle through which it works. The vehicle, having learned to respond readily and automati-

cally to the old impacts, endeavors to keep on doing so; whilst the entity endeavors to make it respond to impacts of a higher, wider nature. This, as I understand it, is what is commonly called a man's karma, although it will apply equally well to any other entity or group of entities in the cosmos; it is that he responds most readily and with pleasure to the impacts of energies which, in the past, he has been used to respond to, and with pain and difficulty to the impacts of energies which are new to him. So if, in the past, the law of evolution, to which entities working up towards self-consciousness responded, was the law of selfishness, the struggle for existence, and the survival of the strongest; then now, when those same entities are beginning to respond to a higher law, that of unselfishness, of struggle for the life of others, there will be for many lives this antagonism between the new and the old causes set up in the past; and these old causes, impressed upon the materials the entity then used, tend to repeat themselves when built into the new bodies, in spite of the fact that the entity is trying to make them respond to thoughts of a higher nature.

A man is limited in two ways: first of all, by his want of capacity to respond to any but the very lowest of vibrations from the planes above the mental; and secondly, by the causes which he himself has

set up in the past, of which he himself carries the germs in latency, and by the potentiality of responding to such causes which he has impressed on the materials he has to use now. These causes, when the man descends into incarnation, attract matter on the mental, astral and physical planes, of such subtlety or density as responds readily to this attractive force, and within the limitations he has thus formed for himself he has to work, until, by effort, he develops the capacity to respond to higher, more spiritual vibrations; to use the energies flowing through him in accordance with the law of his evolution, instead of against it. With such a wide and impersonal law as this, there can be no such thing as dislike or favor, as reward or punishment, except in the sense that a man rewards or punishes himself.

That there may be much apparently unmerited suffering goes without saying, with ignorant beings possessed of the power to help or hinder their fellow beings or those lower in the scale of evolution than themselves; it would be strange if it were not so. But one can easily see that such unmerited suffering, although hurting the sufferer physically for a short time, helps him in higher and more permanent ways; whilst the one who has caused the suffering has built into the sphere of his own thoughts causes which will unerringly bring their due effects, and

when these return to their creator they will make him suffer much the same.

It is a fact well-known to most people that when they are hurt themselves, they feel an almost uncontrollable desire to return the injury, and along such lines we cannot see how suffering would ever cease. It would seem that action and reaction being always equal and opposite, the sum of human and other suffering must go on forever; and that, as more force is generally added by the one who returns an injury, over and above that which he received, it must be an increasing quantity rather than a diminishing one. And so it would be, but for another factor, which is: that force unresisted, harmlessly dissipates itself or may be transmuted into something higher. So the old ethical teachings about "returning good for evil," and that "hatred ceaseth not by hatred at any time," are not so very foolish after all.

When men begin to act in accordance with this higher law, and vibrate in harmony with more spiritual energies, the effects flowing back on them from causes set up in the past will be met in a very different spirit, and instead of reproducing the old feelings of anger, hatred and revenge, and starting anew the old causes, they will rather send towards their injurer thoughts of peace, of love and forgiveness.

True it is, that so long as there is one cause not worked out, or any experiences of which an entity is in ignorance on any plane, or anything belonging to that plane it strives to keep for self, it is bound thereby; but there is "a power within us not ourselves which makes for righteousness," for harmony, and for unity, and as we open wide the windows of our souls to this divine effulgence, growing stronger in love, in power, and in wisdom, the time will inevitably come to each and all of us when we shall enter into our divine birthright and become self-conscious workers for the Brotherhood of Humanity.

CHAPTER VI.

The Seven Planes of the Universe.

IN Theosophical literature, one often reads of the seven principles of man, the seven planes of the universe, and of there being other states of consciousness besides the one we are best acquainted with, *i. e.*, the physical. These states of consciousness arise from the functioning, by the self in man, in one or other of his seven principles, which thus brings him into relation with the corresponding plane of the universe. I think it is realizable that if a man were able to function perfectly in each of these seven vehicles, either separately or together, then the whole universe, material, dynamic, and spiritual, would be embraced by his consciousness, would be within the sphere of his cognizance.

Before going any further, it is perhaps necessary that we should understand to a certain extent what is meant by a plane of the universe, and how these planes are regarded as being situated to one another; and why seven is spoken of as the number of them, and not eight or nine or any other number. By a plane is meant all that portion of cosmic substance which lies within certain degrees of density and rare-

faction, a gradual series of states of matter, similar to those which, on the physical plane, we speak of as solid, liquid, gaseous and etheric. Now, as these substates of matter on one plane are capable of interpenetrating one another, it is only reasonable to suppose that in a much greater sense do the planes themselves interpenetrate.

With regard to the number of them, in all religions, philosophies and sciences, even in materialism, we are given to understand that before the universe existed as we see it, before it became differentiated and manifested—for without difference we can have no manifestation—there must have existed a homogeneous substratum of the diverse things which afterwards appeared. This has been called the Great Unknown Cause of all things—a unity, but a unity with a latent and inner threefoldedness. It is the essence or spirit of all things, having a capacity of manifesting in three directions, as mind, as life, and as form.

It is itself the sum total of all things—the all and the nothing—the Absolute, as it is sometimes called, symbolized, perhaps, by an infinite sphere of homogeneity. It is the atom of atoms, which contains all other atoms within itself. The first step in manifestation consists in positive and negative centres being set up in it—in the one differentiating into

two, or in the expression of the law of polarity; then in the unfolding of the three aspects of the one in this twofold manner, making six aspects within the one, or seven in all. Each succeeding stage in manifestation is a reflection or repetition of this; each centre, as it awakens to renewed activity, being first a trinity in unity, then a duality; then unfolding its three aspects, a septenary. Carried further, these become, on the one side, the seven spiritual forces, the "seven spirits before the throne" of Christianity, the seven Amshaspends of Zoroastrianism, the seven spiritual rays of the Logos of the Gnostics; and on the other, the seven planes of the universe, the seven lokas of the Hindus, the seven worlds or spheres of the Chaldeans and other nations. In the Kabala, also, the seven worlds are outlined—although the three higher are not spoken about, the lower four are plainly set forth.

No less a scientific authority than Faraday, in an article "On the nature of atoms," published in 1844, (Phil. Mag. Vol. XXIX, 136,) said he was "led to the conclusion that atoms are not merely mutually penetrable, but that each atom extends throughout all space, yet always retains its own centre of force!" If this is the case, then each atom must be seven-principled in its nature, must have the capacity or the potentiality of expressing itself in seven

forms of consciousness, of responding to all the seven great forces of nature, of manifesting on all seven planes of the universe; and each entity, of all the graduated series from the crystal to man, must be, in its essential constitution, an atom on one or another plane of the universe.

It will perhaps help to a realization of the magnitude of this subject, if we consider the possibilities which lie within the limits of the physical plane. Prof. Crookes, in his "Genesis of the Elements," has given the rates of vibration which make up what may be called consciousness upon the physical plane. From one to ten vibrations per second is as much as the matter of our nerves is capable of responding to. This corresponds to our sense of touch. From 32 to 38,000 is the limit within which our sense of hearing is of any use to us. From 32 thousand to 34 millions per second are the vibrations we take cognizance of as electrical rays. I would venture to suggest, as we can taste electricity, that these rates of vibration correspond to the sense of taste. From 34 millions to 35 millions of millions is a region at present unknown. Possibly this corresponds to the sense of smell. From 35 millions of millions up to 1875 millions of millions is the range within which what we call light comes—those vibrations which our sense of sight responds to.

Above this comes a region which Prof. Crookes thinks may be that of the X rays, the region to which ordinary clairvoyant vision is very closely allied. Beyond these are still more rapid vibrations, which Prof. Crookes says are so minute as to cease to be refracted, reflected, or polarized. They pass through many so-called opaque bodies, and research begins to show that the most rapid are those which pass most easily through dense substances with scarcely any diminution of intensity ; these he thinks may be of the rate and nature of brain or thought waves. The faculty of responding to all this graduated series of vibrations makes up what we call consciousness on the physical plane. But between the organ which receives a vibration, and the mind which realizes that vibration as something touched, tasted, smelt, heard, or seen, there is a great gap to bridge, which, as has been shown, can only be done by means of the subtler principles of man's constitution.

Rays of light, travelling at the rate of hundreds of millions of millions of vibrations per second, proceed from all objects outwards in all directions. They cross and interpenetrate without in the slightest degree interfering with one another. Some of these impinge upon the retina of the eye and set up corresponding vibrations of a still higher rate in the

substance forming our etheric body. This awakens in our memory some latent image of a similar kind, and we recognize the object as a horse, a tree, or a man.

This recognition may arouse something in our emotional nature—in the substance of that principle we call the astral body—and we have a desire to see the thing closer, or perhaps to get away from it. Instinctively we begin to act in accordance with this desire; but before we have gone very far, this emotion or vibration in the astral body has, in its turn, set the mind body in motion; and we decide that it is not right to let the desire or fear influence us, and by an effort of will we compel the lower vehicles to do what otherwise they would not have done. This effort of will, arising as an extremely rapid vibration in the matter of the mind body, awakens corresponding vibrations of much slower rate in the denser vehicles between it and the physical body, until at last the energy is liberated, moving it in a particular direction.

So it is with all the other senses—these complicated actions, through numberless repetitions, taking place automatically, without our being aware how or why we do a certain thing, or how or why we have arrived at a certain conclusion or decision. But these are merely the activities of the ego work-

ing automatically through his vehicles, and thus manifesting his consciousness through the physical body, by means of which he becomes fully self-conscious upon the physical plane.

In sleep the ego, in its subtler vehicles, according to the testimony of almost all clairvoyants, withdraws from the physical and etheric bodies and floats a little above them. The continuity of consciousness between the vehicles is, to a certain extent, disconnected. The ego receives its impressions now, not from the physical plane by means of the physical sense organs, but from the astral plane by means of the astral body. Some little continuity and connection is still left, by means of which many things experienced or seen by the ego are impressed upon the physical consciousness, thus giving rise to the vivid connected dreams people often have of distant friends, or of places they have never yet visited, but to which they intend shortly to go.

People who have lived lives of great purity and whose mental evolution admits of their functioning consciously when separated from the astral body, as well as from the merely physical, sometimes in sleep rise to the mental plane, coming in contact with more advanced entities, receiving instruction and sometimes warnings, of which, on returning to earth-life they are able to retain the memory, or to

impress upon the physical consciousness by means of what are called symbolical dreams. In hypnotism and mesmerism, the phenomena of spiritualism, lunacy, and in those states of consciousness sometimes called trance, arising from disease, accident, or the use of anæsthetics or other drugs, we get further examples of the working of the ego upon other planes of the universe than the physical, which are perhaps more conclusive than those derived from dreams.

As was lately said in the *Quarterly Review*: "Drs. Braid and Charcot have strangely perplexed the rules of the game of Rationalism. Science discovers that its dry light leaves whole provinces unexplored, and no sooner is thought declared to be a function of the brain than it shows its independence by migrating under trance to the solor plexus." . . . . . "The bold ruffianism of 'matter and motion,' to which man's highest principles were no more sacred than the instincts of swine, or the appetites of the carnivora, blanches and is silent, as physiology, fumbling about after the soul, stumbles upon the 'threshold of consciousness,' and shuts up its case of instruments on the approach of the medium and the mesmerizer . . . . . Science is now confronted by phenomena which it can neither explain nor suppress."

These phenomena are but brief glimpses into regions of the universe, each of which must have its proper use, inhabitants, and scenery; regions the nature and purpose of which were symbolically set forth in the sacred mysteries of all ancient nations, to be afterwards verified by those who, on initiation, were taught the method by which it could be done.

There exists within the ranks of the Theosophical Society a number of students who, following out the directions laid down by qualified teachers, have been able to function consciously on the two planes next above or within the physical—those planes commonly called the astral and devachanic planes, corresponding very closely to the Catholic purgatory and heaven. The results of their investigations have been set forth in books like Mr. Leadbeater's *Astral* and *Devachanic Planes*, Mrs. Besant's *Ancient Wisdom*, and Sinnett's *Growth of the Soul*.

According to these writers, the astral plane is that region in which the psychic forces, gathered or set in motion by any person during an incarnation on this earth, are dissipated, the entity disentangling itself gradually from the astral body, and carrying forward its harvest of intellectual experiences and spiritual aspiration to the next plane, where, in turn, they are worked out and receive their due fruition.

These experiences are lived over and over again,

and, as the matter or energy which made up the mind body is dissipated, they are built into the constitution of the ego itself; from being only half-understood knowledge and undigested experience, they are transmuted into intellectual faculty and wisdom.

It is possible, as the Theosophic students before mentioned have shown, for individuals still in earth-life, by persistently following a certain course of training, living lives of purity and spiritual aspiration, to gain consciousness and to work for humanity on the astral and devachanic planes, and there to come in contact and perhaps into direct personal relations with, advanced entities, sometimes spoken of as Adepts or Masters.

These are said to be perfected men, beings whose evolution is finished—at any rate so far as this earth of ours is concerned—but who still remain in touch with it, in order to assist the spiritual growth and evolution of humanity to higher levels of intellect and power and sympathy. As a disciple or pupil of one of these Masters, a man's knowledge of the various planes of the universe will largely increase; things which before this have been matters of intellectual speculation, he will then be able to investigate and to verify for himself. With such guidance he will be able to identify his consciousness with the

spiritual forces coming from planes higher, even, than the mental; and as the ultimate aim of man's evolution is the attainment of unity, with perfect self-consciousness on all planes, the time will come to him who strives, when he will function just as consciously there as we do here now, until, in the fullness of time, he becomes perfectly self-conscious on all the seven planes of the universe.

CHAPTER VII.

The Goal of Human Evolution.

TO those at all acquainted with the doctrine of evolution, as put forward by the exponents of modern science, it must often have occurred, that if man has ascended or has been evolved, through many millions of years, from forms similar to the jelly-fish, then millions of years of further evolution should bring him to a very different stage of development from that which he is in at present.

If they then examine the data collected by anthropology and archæology, of the way in which man has developed, since first his form became what we can strictly call human, they will find that his evolution during a period variously stated as being from six thousand to some thirty millions of years has been carried on, not by increased complexity of structural development, but by an increase of intellectual power. It has not been an unfolding of form, but an evolution of mind. This being the case, we should naturally expect that the summit to which the human race is striving, and to which in many millions of years it may attain, is the perfection of intellectual development.

But intellect is not all. We draw a great distinction in our minds between individuals whose intellectual development may be said to be about equal; for one man may know just as much as another, and yet be wanting in the faculty which alone makes that knowledge of any use—that is, the power or the will to use it. Byron and Burns were men of intellect far beyond the ordinary, but they lacked the will to use it as they might have done. Tennyson and Longfellow were perhaps not at all superior to the other two in intellect; but with them the will was there to use it aright. But it is possible to have men of great intellect and great will power also, and who yet fall far short of what we should consider ideal perfection. Thus Napoleon and Bismarck, in spite of their intellectual and dynamic development, will not compare, as ideal types, with such characters as Christ and Buddha.

So that the ideal of human perfection which we may suppose that the human race, in its totality, is trying to reach, must be one in which knowledge, power and sympathy are shown at their highest and best. Such a one we should call a perfect man, an adept in knowledge, a master over nature's forces, a brother of compassion as well as of wisdom.

Between an Australian aboriginal and such a type of man, there is a tremendous gulf, a gulf which

seems impossible to be bridged unless there is some continuing principle carrying forward the sum of the experiences gained in each earth-life; in fact, evolution or unfolding of any description would be an impossibility, unless there was something into which experience gained could be involved or enfolded. With this theory that there is a continuing principle which passes from body to body, using the experience gained in the past to enable it to attain greater heights, it does not seem so impossible. In fact, once one becomes familiar with it, the doctrine of evolution itself seems to need the theory of the reincarnating principle as its necessary corollary.

As we see existing side by side a graduated series of centres of consciousness from the crystal to the man, whose range varies within extremely wide limits, and as we realize there is no reason to think that those limits cannot be transcended, it would seem quite as reasonable to suppose that above man there is a graduated series of intelligences, each step as much wider in range of consciousness as a man's is wider than an animal's, an animal's than a plant's, or a plant's than a crystal's.

If this is the case, and part of the work of the intelligences next above man is an endeavor to raise men to the same position as themselves, we ought to find some trace amongst human literatures, sciences and

philosophies of such progress being possible, of such help having been given, and of men attaining it.

There is an abundance of such evidence. The religious books of all nations are founded on one or another instance of what the people who wrote them regarded as the descent of some such intelligence, or, as they called it, Divine Being, into human incarnation, to teach humanity the goal which lay before it, the lines along which such progress was possible, and the steps which led up to it.

Almost every ancient nation had its mysteries, in which those who were found worthy received directions and teachings for realizing the higher life, and opening up conscious communication with the adept world. The qualities required of all candidates for initiation in all the ancient religious systems, were high degrees of moral and intellectual development, steadfastness of purpose, and unselfishness of action. Having succeeded in passing the tests and ordeals imposed, they were then instructed in the method by which they could acquire the psychic powers which would enable them to verify for themselves the truths about the reality of the subjective life, the unity of God, the state into which the soul passes after death, the rebirth into bodies and conditions in strict accordance with its past development, and the means of its liberation from the

troubles and miseries of earth-life. All of these truths had been symbolically set forth in the allegories of the lesser mysteries.

It has sometimes been doubted whether, with the decline of the mysteries at the beginning of the Christian era, any school for occult development did remain. Those who study the writings of travellers in India, who have given any attention to the religious life of the people, will find that all Hindu religions and philosophies have the attainment of this higher or Divine consciousness as their main reason for existence, as much now as ever. If they then consider what could have been the underlying purpose of the various mystic societies, such as the Gnostics, Rosicrucians, Kabbalists, Hermetists, Alchemists, they will have but little doubt that those amongst them who were really in earnest were aspirants for adeptship; and they will find much evidence going to show that some of them did attain it, and became, to a greater or lesser extent, masters over the occult forces of nature.

Many examples might be given, from the writings of philosophers and alchemists of the middle ages, in more or less fanciful and mystical verbiage, to show that the channels of initiation were by no means closed, and that through the psychic faculties it was possible to obtain access to and communication

with those intelligences who, having transcended the limits of ordinary human consciousness, maintain a continued self-conscious existence on these subtler planes of being, through which ordinary men pass in the periods between incarnations without bringing back any connected memory. Now we come to the question as to whether such access and communication is possible in the present day.

If our contention is correct that at the back of, or underlying the consciousness, life, and objective form of every man, there is an eternal subjective centre, having the capacity of manifesting on, and of coming into conscious relation with, all the different planes of the universe; and if, as the phenomena of dreams, mesmerism, clairvoyance and spiritualism go to show, each one of us has now more or less developed vehicles, in which we function actively on these planes, without retaining or impressing on our physical memory any recollection of them; and if our evolution is going on along the lines of the development and perfection of these subtler vehicles; then it is only reasonable to suppose that, as this development proceeds, our memory will be better, our consciousness of these different experiences more connected, and our response to and communication with entities who have completed what we are beginning to realize as possible to ourselves will become

not vague and semi-conscious. but defined and real.

Our physical consciousness, we shall begin to realize, is, as it were, but a leaf on the tree of our permanent existence, a leaf which takes a particular form and is of a particular nature, because in the past the tree to which it belongs has, by means of previous leaves, acquired certain stores of forces and accumulation of experience. So long as we identify ourselves with the leaf side of our nature and ignore the tree side, so long will life seem full of suffering and useless endeavor, the sport of unknown causes, and we shall regard nature, or the sum of the forces causing evolution, as caring only for the development of the race, and utterly careless of the individuals; but more and more as we try to understand the nature of the more permanent life, and to act from that standpoint rather than from the physical and impermanent one, shall we realize that the cause of suffering lies in our own actions; that not the slightest particle of an endeavor or aspiration is wasted; and that all evolution, whilst tending to the elevation of humanity as a whole, has to do this by the evolution and perfection of the individuals composing it.

This more permanent part of man's nature—though perhaps not the most permanent—sometimes spoken of as the causal body, is that vehicle into

which the intellectual experiences and spiritual aspirations of each personality or incarnation are built, and in which the ego functions on the higher levels of the mental plane. As a man turns his attention to the purification and development of his subtler vehicles, the continuity between one state of consciousness and another becomes more pronounced, and his activities can be directed towards a definite end, instead of being a mere semi-conscious repetition of his waking thoughts and actions.

At this stage he can be of use on the astral plane, in the carrying out of that spiritual advancement of humanity which the adept fraternity are specially concerned in, and if he is found worthy and is willing to accept the conditions, he can become a pupil or disciple of one or other of them. A little experience on these lines enables such disciples to recover recollections of former lives, and gradually the subjective consciousness becomes more real, the experiences of earth-life of less consequence.

Six qualifications are necessary before the disciple can become an adept. These are stated in the Hindu books as regulation of thought and of conduct, tolerance, indifference to praise or blame, steadfastness, and confidence. When these are perfectly acquired, the disciple becomes a member of the adept fraternity, and only then can he be said to have really

begun the task of the true occult development; for very many lives may have to be lived before he can be considered a Master, in the full sense of the term.

As said by Mr. Sinnett, in his "Growth of the Soul":—"When the Adept, after many protracted incarnations taken by his own will and choice, has at last attained a complete mastery of all the wisdom and knowledge this scheme of evolution can afford, he is ready to pass on. . . . When all the myriad enigmas of good and evil, of sin and sorrow and hope, are resolved into intelligible meaning, and neither the earth below, nor the heaven above, nor life, nor death, holds any riddles from his understanding, the adept is qualified to attain the final rank, the mysterious union with the fundamental laws of the cosmos, and to become, in a certain sense, their expression, their radiant point, so to speak, through which the divine idea thenceforth actually flows."

If we endeavor to outline to ourselves the stages which there may be beyond this for intelligent entities to reach, as their evolution proceeds, we have only to think of the intelligence necessary to conduct the building of a new planet and the molding and guiding of the evolution of the entities upon it; or, taking the inauguration of a solar system, we can try to think of all the knowledge and command of

forces necessary for such an undertaking, the amount of patience, tolerance, and perseverance required. But it seems to me we shall be making a mistake if we think of such an intelligence as a sort of larger, more perfect man; it would be much better to realize that every essential subjective atom within the cosmos is uncreated, eternal, and in potentiality infinite; and that every such atom can manifest along three lines—those of form, of life, and of consciousness—the positive and negative aspects of these three making, with its own essential nature, the seven principles of the atom, the man, the planet, the solar system, and the universe.

With such an idea, one can realize to some extent how a universe is builded; how the evolution of form and life and consciousness is carried on; how a centre which has been for ages in an unmanifested, unconscious condition, may, on coming under the influences radiating from a more advanced centre, begin feebly to respond to the lowest and slowest of them, setting up, in its turn, vibrations, which enable it to attract around itself still less progressed centres, which will be for it its body. In company, then, with countless other centres at the same stage of development, it will go to make up the material out of which a world is built, and throughout that cycle of evolution will ever be entering into combi-

nations of greater and greater complexity, until all the experiences necessary along the lines of material evolution have been gained. At a further stage, such an atom will have begun to respond to influences or vibrations bringing into activity the life side of its nature; it will now be engaged more in vitalizing forms than in forming the material of such forms; it will be at the stage spoken of in Theosophical books as the elemental stage; through all the kingdoms of nature it will go, no longer the material of forms, but a builder of forms, a sentient life, bent on getting all the experiences that life can give.

Further on still, this centre we are following will gradually evolve the capacity of responding to still more subtle and rapid vibrations than those of sensation—those which Prof. Crookes has called thought waves, and which he has spoken of as being so rapid that they pass through almost all opaque bodies without the slightest diminution of intensity, and are hence incapable of being refracted, reflected or polarized. It will now have become a mental entity, and though for long periods of time it very possibly acts more as a mental force wielded by some higher will, than as a self-conscious individual working out its own destiny—to express it in technical language, it is at first only monadic essence working as part of a group soul, or the monad manifesting in one or

another of the kingdoms of nature—yet, as its evolution proceeds, self-consciousness is gained, and gradually the sphere of forces emanating from it as the centre, and forming a faint cloud around the physical body, in which it is incarnated, will expand, until, as in the case of men of great intellect, it influences perhaps a whole nation, so that it moves and acts, for the time being, as one man, and finally encircles the globe on which he lives, as we are told the aura of some of those we call Masters does.

It will not be very difficult, then, to see how this expansion of capacity, this bringing of potentiality into actuality, once the entity begins to function consciously on higher planes than the mental, will be the conscious intelligence ruling and guiding the evolution of a planet or solar system, vivifying its lives, enlightening its humanity, and striving ever and ever to bring them to the same point as that to which it has arrived itself.

Thought will not carry us much farther, but still we can see there need be no limitations; no point fixed, beyond which such entities cannot go—always retaining each its own centre—onwards and outwards to the infinities.

CHAPTER VIII.

Ancient Religions.

THERE is a correspondence, if not fundamental identity, to be found between the main teachings of Theosophy, and of most, if not all, ancient religions.

These main teachings may be summarized as follows :—

1st. The Eternal Universal Essence of Spirit, underlying and forming the basis of all manifested things, in a state of subjective or latent threefoldedness.

2nd. The periodical manifestation of this latent threefoldedness in a septenary manner, thus producing the seven planes of the universe, the seven principles of a world, man or atom.

3rd. The cyclic evolution or unfolding of these seven principles by a process of birth and rebirth, or reincarnation.

4th. The Law of Causation or Karma, by means of which all evolution is carried on, all apparent differences accounted for.

5th. The states or planes other than the physical, in which each entity has to learn to function before its evolution can be said to be completed or perfected.

6th. The goal towards which evolution is tending; first, to the production of a form in which self-consciousness can be attained; then to the perfection of this self-consciousness—the production of an Adept or Master.

7th. The means by which this goal is to be attained, spoken of in Theosophical literature as the Path of Discipleship.

These seven teachings are the answers, however differently expressed, to the three eternal questions: Whence came we? What are we? Whither are we going? Every religion has made some attempt to answer them, and it is these answers I desire to put before you.

The Chinese are regarded by some as the descendants of a very ancient civilization; and the religion of Lao Tze was only a reformation of their ancient primitive religion, Shintoism. In their books, the One Eternal Infinite Real Existence is called Tao, and speaking of it, it is said:—"Before heaven and earth were, Tao was. It existed without change from all time. Spiritual beings drew their spirituality therefrom, while the universe became what we see it now. To Tao the zenith is not high, nor the nadir low; no point of time is long ago, nor by lapses of ages has it grown old. (Chiangtze, p. 76; quoted in Lucifer, vol. XI.)

In the Vedas and Upanishads of the Hindus, we find the same thoughts expressed. An instance from the Mundakopanishad (sec. 1, pt. 1, v. 7 and 8) will perhaps suffice. "Just as a spider spins forth and unwinds, as plants grow on the earth, as hair and down from man, so from imperishable That comes forth this all. With brooding thought does Brahman swell; thence unto substance birth is given; from substance life, mind, being, worlds, and deathlessness as the result of sacred works."

In the Vishnu Purana we read: "Om, glory to Him who dwells in all beings! Victory be to thee, thou heart-pervading One. Adoration be to thee, thou Cause of the existence of all things! Glory be to thee, Lord of the Senses, the Supreme Spirit, the Ancient of birth!"

The Egyptians, according to their religious writings, called the "Book of the Dead," found in ancient mummy cases, held that "in the beginning was the Noun, the primordial Ocean, in the infinite depth of which floated the germs of all things. From all eternity God generated Himself, and gave birth to Himself in the bosom of this liquid mass, as yet without form and without use. He is the One Being, only, perfect, endowed with knowledge and unfallacious intelligence. He is the One only One, He who exists essentially, Who alone lives in sub-

stance, the sole generator in the heaven and on earth who is not generated, Father of Fathers, Mother of Mothers."

Amongst the ancient Chaldeans, the ancestors of the old Zoroastrians and the later Parsees, "Zeruana Akerna, 'time without bounds,' was the ineffable All; in this arose Ahura Mazda, the World Soul, whose names are many. He is the Being, and One Existence, the One who was, who is, and who shall always be. He is pure spirit, the spirit of spirits, omniscient and omnipotent, the supreme sovereign; he is beneficent, benevolent, and merciful to all."

In the writings of the Kabbalists, those who held the key of the Jewish Old Testament, the Supreme is thus addressed: "Thou art God who supports by the divinity all things formed, and sustains all the existences by thy unity. Thou art God, and there is not any distinction established between thy divinity, thy unity, thy eternity, and thy existence; because all is only one mystery, and although the names may be distinct, all have only one meaning."

The periodical manifestation of this Eternal Unity, in three, five, seven and many forms, is thus expressed, according to the Chinese: "One and universal is Tao, but the first has produced a second, and the second a third, and these three are all things." (Kenealy, "Book of God," 1, 36.)

The Hindu Trinity of Brahma, Vishnu and Siva is too well-known to need further exposition. As the Mundakopanishad (sec. II, pt. I, v. I) puts it: "As from a blazing fire, a thousand ways, fly forth, of one same nature, sparks, just so do creatures manifold from That beyond decay, come forth, and thither go again. Seven life powers come from Him, seven flames, seven foods to feed the flames—enlightenments—these seven worlds in which the life powers move, in secret hid, seven placed in each."

Also in the Tattiriopanishad (pt. 2, v. 11, seq.), we find, when we add to the five sheaths of the soul or Self there mentioned the physical body and universal spirit, that we have man described as a seven-principled being.

The Egyptian Trinity of Ra, Osiris-Isis, and Horus, is also well-known. In the volume of "The Book of the Dead" (quoted in S. D., vol. 1, p. 312), we find Osiris saying: "He is Toum, self-generated and self-existent, issued from Noun, the celestial river . . . . and he created the gods out of his limbs, fourteen gods (twice seven,) seven dark and seven light gods. . . . . He speaks of the seven luminous ones who follow their Lord (Osiris in Amenti,) who confers justice." Thus heaven, or Amenti, was sevenfold (S. D., vol. II, p. 633), and the constitution of man was sevenfold: namely, Chat, the physi-

cal body; Auch, the vital force; Ka, the astral body; Ab Hati, the animal soul; Bai, the intelligence; Cherybi, spiritual soul; Chu, the divine spirit.

In the Chaldeo-Babylonian cosmogony, according to Lenormant, the three zones of the universe were ruled over by a triad—the heaven by Anu, the earth by Bel, the underworld by Nouah. On one of the Chaldean tablets spoken of by Mr. G. Smith (quoted S. D., II, p. 61) we find mention of the seven messengers of the god Anu. According to Psellus (as quoted in Mr. Meade's "Orpheus," p. 124): "They assert that there are seven corporeal worlds: one empyrean, and the first after this three ethereal and then three material worlds." Among the Zoroastrians and later Parsees, we find that they believed in one eternal being called Ahura Mazda; that there were two eternal principles involved in it, called good and evil; that there were seven attributes to it, called the Amesha Spentas, whose names, being translated, mean divine wisdom, good mind, purity, fruitfulness, devotion, healthfulness and immortality. (Zor. p. 12.)

Among the Kabbalists, "from the eternal one, Ain Soph, emanated the upper Sephirothal Triad, and from these the lower seven Sephiroth, the builders of the universe." With them, as with the Egyptians (see S. D., vol. II, p. 633, also p. 292,

vol. I), man was regarded as of sevenfold constitution.

In the ancient Chinese religion, reincarnation does not seem to have been so much spoken about as taken for granted.

In the Upanishads of the Hindus it is much the same; though in the Kathopanishad we find it stated: "If here in this life one is able to comprehend Him (Brahma) before the death of the body, he will be liberated from the bondage of the world; if one is not able to comprehend Him, he is destined to assume another body in this world."

Among the Egyptians reincarnation was clearly taught. Mrs. Besant says, in the introduction of her book, "The Ancient Wisdom": "In the fragments of the 'Book of the Dead,' we can study the conceptions of the reincarnating of the human soul, of its pilgrimage towards and its ultimate union with the Logos. The famous papyrus of 'the scribe Ani triumphant in peace' is full of touches that remind the reader of the scriptures of other faiths; his journey through the underworld, his expectation of re-entering his body, his identification with the Logos."

"Saith Osiris Ani: I am the great one, son of the Great One; I am Fire, the Son of Fire; I have knit together my bones; I have made myself whole and

sound; I have become young once more; I am Osiris, the Lord of Eternity." (XLIII, 14.)

In another quotation from the "Book of the Dead," (given in the S. D., vol. 1, p. 327) the 'soul' (the Ego or Self) of the defunct is said to be living in eternity; it is immortal; "co-eval with, and disappearing with the solar boat, that is, for the cycle of necessity. This 'soul' emerges from the Tiaou (the realm of the cause of life) and joins the living on earth by day, to return to Tiaou every night."

The Chaldeans (Orpheus, p. 129) were of opinion that the soul often descends into the world through many causes; either through the defluxion of its wings, or through the paternal will.

The doctrine of karma is so closely blended with that of reincarnation, and they are both such fundamental tenets of the ancient religions, that perhaps that is why we find so little mention of them. There is also another fact to be noted—that while many o these fundamental teachings are taken as understood and are but little mentioned in one system, some particular one of them seems to be very much dwelt upon. Thus magic and ceremonial and duty to ancestors seem to have been the things most in evidence amongst the Chinese. Cosmogenesis and the duality underlying all manifested things were the main teachings most dwelt upon by the Chaldeans and

their later offshoots, the Jews, Parsees, and Mohammedans. Amongst the Egyptians, theogony and the experiences of the soul after death are what we find most about. With the Hindus, the unity underlying all things, and the manner in which man can attain to self-conscious knowledge of it, seem to be the main themes. With the Buddhists, the teaching put forward most prominently is that of the cause of sorrow and the way to free oneself from it, by doing away with the causes of rebirth. The special teaching of the Christian religion, if we can judge from the recorded sayings of its great exponent, was the enunciation of the principle of service and devotion to the interests and welfare of others, rather than the development of individual perfection, or personal salvation from suffering.

The Theosophic teachings as to the after-death states of the Ego find their fullest exposition in the Egyptian religious books. Sekhen is one of the names given for the residence of the God Khem—that is, Horus-Osiris. In the Ritual of the Dead the defunct is shown entering into Sekhen with Horus-Thot and "emerging from it as pure spirit" (lxiv. 29, quoted in S. D., vol. 1, p. 220). Thus the defunct says (v. 130): "I see the forms of (myself as various) men transforming eternally. . . . I know this (chapter). He who knows it takes all kinds of

living forms." And in v. 35 he says, addressing the "ancestral heart," or reincarnating principle, the permanent Ego:—"Oh my heart, my ancestral heart, necessary for my transformations. . . . do not separate thyself from me before the guardian of the scales. Thou art my personality within my breast, divine companion watching over my fleshes (bodies)." After death the man passed into what were called the fields of Aanroo, and was then assigned to one of the seven regions, to work out any evil deeds he had committed when in earth life. Following this he passed to the seven regions of Amenti, where he received the fruits of his good deeds, or, as the Egyptians put it, gleaned the corn of life seven cubits high (see S. D., vol. 1, p. 674).

There is a close parallel to be drawn between these two regions of seven subdivisions each, and the Thibetan seven hells and seven heavens, so fully described in 'Waddell's Gazetteer of Sikhim.' Although ostensibly Buddhists, there is so much nature-worship and devil-worship in the Thibetan religion, closely allied to the Shintoism of Japan and China and the practices of the ancient Mexicans and Peruvians, that one is inclined to accept the theory that these ancient religions of Egypt, America, Japan, and China are the last surviving relics of the religion of the lost Atlantis.

In the Gathas of the Zoroastrians and Parsees (z. 12), the idea of a future life is distinctly taught. "There is a bridge called Chinvat Peretu which leads thither, but it is only the souls of the good who can pass it, while the wicked fall from it down into hell. A good man's spirit, remaining near the head of the body, tastes during the three nights after death as much happiness as the whole world can enjoy; he passes into the most blissful region and is met by his own conscience in the shape of a beautiful, heavenly maiden, who recites to him all his good deeds, and then conducts him through the Paradises of Humate, Hukhte, and Huvraste—that is, good thought, good speech and good deed—and finally into the region of endless light. The evil man suffers correspondingly for three nights as much as the whole living world can suffer, and then is taken through a foul region into the hells of evil thought, evil word and evil deed, and finally into that of endless night."

Among the Hindus, one personal life cycle consists of a successive life in each of the three worlds or lokas. At first an entity will live in this world the simple life of the senses, a life in which there is little intellectual activity, and after death will spend a long period in Bhuvar-loka, (the astral plane,) and a very short period in Svarga-loka, or Devachan.

As his evolution proceeds, and intellect takes the place of sensation, he will spend less time on the astral plane and more and more in the devachanic, until the time comes when, having in many lives passed through the main stages of human evolution represented by the four castes, he begins the task of liberating the soul from the round of births and deaths.

With the Chinese, as I have said, Tao is the eternal universal principle, and it is also the fire burning in the human heart, and the path by which the consciousness of the student is gradually centered there, and union with the divine attained. In the Tao Teh Ching, as quoted in "Ancient Wisdom," it was said: "Scholars of the highest class, when they hear about the Tao, earnestly carry it into practice;" and in another quotation from the Classic of Purity it is said; "Now the spirit of man loves purity, but his mind disturbs it; the mind loves stillness, but his desires draw it away. If he could always send his desires away, his mind would of itself become still. Let his mind be made clean and his spirit of itself becomes pure."

With the Zoroastrians the axiom, "Pure thoughts, pure words, pure deeds," is constantly insisted upon. They are often called fire-worshippers, but the visible fire, with the founder of this religion, was only

the outer symbol of the heavenly fire coming down from Ahura Mazda, giving knowledge of all heavenly secrets (Four Great Religions, p. 74.)

The whole reason for the existence of the Egyptian Mysteries, and for those of the other nations—which were to a great extent copied from or were similar to the Egyptian Mysteries—was that the neophytes might gradually be instructed in the knowledge, which, when fully assimilated, would make of them adepts.

Clement of Alexandria, speaking of the Egyptian Mysteries, is quoted in the "Growth of the Soul" (p. 336) as saying, "The Egyptians neither intrusted their secrets to everyone, nor degraded the secrets of divine matters by disclosing them to the profane; reserving them for the heir-apparent to the throne, and for such of the priests as excelled in virtue and wisdom. It was necessary that the character of the candidate for initiation should be pure and unsullied; and the novitiates were commanded to study those lessons which tended to purify the mind and to encourage morality."

The Hindu philosophy may be said to be based upon the idea that it is possible for a man to realize his own individuality; to attain to perfect self-consciousness. To put it in the language of the Upanishads, their efforts are directed towards the attain-

ment of a stage where they can realize the phrase "I am Brahm," and that Brahm is also "I" (See Four Great Religions, pp. 41, 42).

There are three paths to adeptship or Yogaship; which three are, in reality, only subdivisions of one. The first is Karma Marga, in which a man attains to union or Yoga by performing actions from a sense of duty, without any desire for reward. The second is Gnyana Marga, in which intellectual development is pursued through many lives, until discrimination between the real and the unreal, disgust for the unreal, the six mental qualifications—control of mind, control of body, tolerance, endurance, faith and balance—together with the longing for liberation, are all attained. The man is then ready to become initiated into Yogaship. The third road is Bhakti Marga, or devotion. "The non-attachment gained by renunciation in Karma Marga, by discrimination in Gnyana Marga, it gains by expelling all lower attachment, by the one attachment to its Lord. By love it conquers all baser desires, and they wither for lack of expression."

The three paths are like the three strands of one rope; work as duty is full of devotion, and experience brings wisdom. Where wisdom is patiently striven for, devotion follows as a natural result, and in the heart of the truly devoted wisdom arises, as

it were, spontaneously. All this is plainly set forth in the Upanishads, in the Bhavagad Gita, and in the works of Shri Sankara-charya. I will give one quotation from the Kathopanishad, in which Yama, the god of death, declares the way by which men attain to liberation from rebirth (Kath. Sec. Part III, p.63).

"The wise should sink sense in mind; this sink in reason; sink in the Great Self reason; this in the Peace Self (or Brahman) sink. Arise, awake, seek out the great ones and get understanding. Sharp as the edge of a razor and hard to pass over, hard is that path, say the seers, for mortal to tread . . . . , THAT knowing, man death's mouth escapes."

In the Mundakopanishad (Sec. III., Part IV., p. 126), speaking of Brahm, it says: "This Self is to be reached by truth alone, and meditation, by knowledge pure, and constant discipline. He is in the body's midst, made all of light, translucent; whom practiced men (ascetics), with sins washed away, behold."

Very badly, and very inadequately, I am afraid, owing to the want of proper books of reference, I have traced through the ancient religions of China, India, Chaldea-and Egypt the main threads of teachings, which, in the Theosophic literature, are gathered together in so concise a form that it might al-

most be said "He who runs may read." In the later religions like Buddhism, Christianity and Mohammedanism, the same fundamental teachings could also be traced. In the Platonic philosophy, Gnosticism, in the alchemistical and other mediæval philosophic systems, and even in the later German metaphysics, traces of their influence are to be found. It is not for us to put forward any religion as better or worse than another, nor to seek in any way to pull down one religion to put another in its place. Recognizing, as we do, that they all teach the Fatherhood of God, the Brotherhood of Man, and the life everlasting, or the attainment of perfect self-consciousness; we want, if possible, to strip away from the essentials the rags, tatters and dust of the non-essentials of ritual, dogma and ceremonial, which have gathered around them in their progress down the ages.

Then they would be able to point out to all men, "not the letter which killeth, but that spirit of all religions which giveth life;" and each, in its own way, would demonstrate the existence of the soul, the reality of the world beyond the grave, the purpose of all life and evolution, the goal towards which all is tending, and the manner in which that goal is to be attained.

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